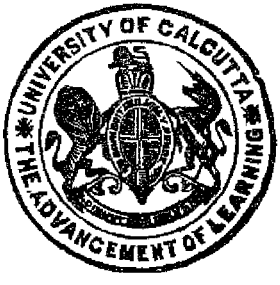
# THE ORIGIN

OF THE

# BENGALI SCRIPT

BY

R. D. BANERJI, M.A.

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## PREFACE

This essay on the origin of the Bengali Script was originally written by me in my mother tongue at the suggestion of the late Āchārya Rāmendra Sundara Trivedī, Principal of the Ripon College, who to my great regret has not lived to see its publication. Principal Trivedi intended to publish this essay in the Journal of the Baṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad, of which learned Society he was the Secretary and one of the founders. At the suggestion of the Hon'ble Justice Sir Āśutoṣa Mukhopādhyāya, Sarasvatī, Sāstra-Vāchaspati, it was translated into English and submitted with Principal Trivedī's consent for the University of Calcutta Jubilee Research Prize which was awarded to me in 1913. The publication of this work was undertaken by the University of Calcutta at the direction of the Hon'ble Justice Sir Āśutoṣa Mukhopādhyāya, Sarasvatī, Śāstra-Vāchaspati, Kt., C.S.I., M.A., D.L., Ph D., D.Sc., etc., then Vice-Chancellor of the University.

I am indebted to my teacher the venerable Pandit Mahāmahopādhyāya Hara Prasāda Śāstrī, M.A., C.I.E., formerly Principal of the Government Sanskrit College, Calcutta, and now President of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and Dr. D. B. Spooner, B.A., Ph.D., F.A.S.B., formerly Superintendent, Archæological Survey, Eastern Circle, and now Officiating Director General of Archæology in India, for many corrections and valuable suggestions. My friend Mr. Surendranath Kumar has helped me greatly by translating portions of works in German and French for my use. My pupil Prof. Kalidas Nag, M.A., of the Scottish Churches College, Calcutta, has revised the

type-written manuscript twice and has corrected many of the proofs. My thanks are due to Sj. Hemchandra Gosvāmī, Extra Assistant Commissioner, Gauhati, Assam, for pointing out the modern Bengali inscription recording the dedication of the image of Āmrātakeśvara at Kāmākhyā near Gauhati in Assam. To my friend Pandit Vasanta Rañjana Rāya Vidvadvallabha Kavirañjana, the Custodian of the manuscript collection of the Baṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad, I owe a deep debt of gratitude. Mr. Rāya has enabled me to complete the history of the development of the Bengali Script by collecting transitional and final forms from the manuscript of Caṇḍidāsa's Kṛṣṇa Kīrttana, discovered by him in Bankura, a task which I could never have succeeded in completing without his aid. I am indebted to the Council of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Executive Committee of the Baṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad for permission to photograph and reproduce certain pages of a manuscript of the Bodhicharyāvatāra of Śāntideva, written in 1492 V. E., and of the Kṛṣṇa-Kīrttana of Caṇḍīdāsa.

POONA,
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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### *A. The arrangement.*

In an essay on the origin and development of the Bengali script, one must necessarily follow the steps of the late Hofrath Dr. Georg Bühler, the father of the science of Indian Palæography. Though Burnell's work on the subject was published long ago, the accuracy of the narrative and the scientific arrangement of Buhler's work have made his claim to the title indisputable. His *Indische Palaeographie* was published in 1896, as a part of the *Grundriss der indo-arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde*, organised by that indefatigable publisher, Dr. Karl J. Trübner of Strassburg. The work, as a matter of course, was short and concise, and dealt with the development of Indian alphabets up to the 12th century A. D. The development of the alphabets, from B. C. 350 to 600 A. D., is clearly described in this work. But after that period, lack of materials obliged the learned author to consider the development of the Northern alphabet as a whole, and not according to its varieties. The discoveries made during the last sixteen years have rendered it possible to take up that work now. The arrangement followed in these pages is mainly that of Dr. Bühler's from the dawn of the historical period to the 6th century A. D., but is different with regard to the subsequent periods. In latter periods, more attention has been paid to specimens from North-Eastern India, and the latest discoveries added to the list of epigraphs, have been analysed. Thus, the inscriptions on the railing-pillars at Bodh-Gayā have been placed in their proper position in the chronological order

according to the new light thrown on them. In the Gupta period, the addition of a new variety of the alphabet is now possible, owing to the discoveries of the remains of ancient Indian civilisation in the deserts of Central Asia. Fresh discoveries have also made it possible to trace the gradual displacement of the Eastern variety of the Northern alphabet by the Western one, in the 5th and 6th centuries A. D., and to determine the exact epoch of the final displacement. Finally, new materials have facilitated the determination of the type specimens of each variety, in each particular century, with a nearer approach to accuracy.

From the 7th century onward, it has been found impossible to follow the arrangement in Dr. Bühler's work, as the development of the Eastern variety from 600-1100 A. D. has not been clearly shown there. In the following pages, the alphabets of the North-Eastern inscriptions of the 6th and 7th centuries A.D. have been separately analysed. In the 8th century, we find three different varieties of the alphabet in Northern India, or more strictly four, if we count the alphabet of Afghanistan, which is as yet but little known. The Western and Afghanistan varieties were developed from the old Western variety, while the Central and Eastern varieties were evolved out of the old Eastern. The Eastern variety lost ground and its Western boundary gradually receded eastwards. The development, of the Eastern alphabet only, has been followed in these pages. It has become possible to show, that proto-Bengali forms were evolved in the North-East, long before the invasion of Northern India, by the Nāgarī alphabet of the South-West, and that Nāgarī has had very little influence upon the development of the Bengali script. The chronology of the Pāla dynasty of Bengal, and specially their relations with the Gurjjara-Pratīhāras have been settled from

synchronisms, and a detailed discussion of the subject will be found in my monograph on the *Pālas of Bengal* [1]

It is evident that Nārāyaṇapāla preceded Mahendrapāla and Magadha, specially the Western portion of it was included for sometime in the Empire of the Gurjjara-Pratīhāras. The establishment of this sequence is of the utmost importance, as it enables us to treat the analysis of Pāla records, which are dated in the majority of cases in regnal years, with more confidence.

With the introduction of the Nāgarī script in the 10th century, the Western limit of the use of the Eastern alphabet was still further reduced. In the 11th century, we find that, there is very little similarity between the alphabet used in Benares and that used in Gayā. The progress of the changes has been very rapid, and we find the complete proto-Bengali alphabet in the 11th century A.D. In the 12th century, we find further changes, which make the formation of the modern Bengali alphabet almost complete. The final development of certain letters, such as *i*, *ca* and *ṇa*, are not noticeable until after the Muhammadan conquest. The dearth of records of the 13th and 14th centuries A.D., both manuscript and epigraphic, makes it impossible to follow the development of these letters in this period. The shock of the Muhammedan conquest paralysed Eastern India, from which it never recovered entirely. The blow stunned literature, prevented its growth during the first two centuries after the conquest, and a partial revival was made only in the 15th century. The revival received a fresh impetus from the Neo-Vaiṣṇavism of Caitanya and his followers. With the paralysis of literature, the development of the alphabet also stopped. Very few

[1] Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. V, Pt. III.

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[1] Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. V, Pt. III.

changes have, indeed, been made in the Eastern alphabet from the 12th century A.D. down to the nineteenth. Such changes, as are noticeable, were made during the 15th and 16th centuries, and have been illustrated by the alphabet used in two Mss. written in Bengali :—

(1) Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, copied in Vikrama Samvat 1492 (1435 A.D.), discovered by Mahāmahopādhyāya Haraprasāda Śāstrī, C. I. E., in Nepal and purchased by him for the Asiatic Society of Bengal. (No. *G.* 8067.) The complete colophon of this ms. has already been published by me in my monograph on Saptagrāma.[1]

(2) Caṇḍīdāsa's *Kṛṣṇa-Kīrtana*, a new work discovered by Paṇdit Vasantarañjana Rāya, Vidvadvallabha, the Keeper of the ms. collection of the Vaṅgīya-Sāhitya-Pariṣad. Though the material is paper, the script makes it impossible to assign the ms. to any date later than the 14th century A.D.

The completely developed alphabet has not changed at all during the 17th and 18th centuries A.D. In the 19th century, the vernacular and classical literature received a fresh impetus, as the result of the contact with the West, but the alphabet ceased to change. Its forms were stereotyped by the introduction of the printing press, and it is not likely that in future it will change its forms in each century.

### *B. The limits of the use of the Eastern Variety.*

From the beginning of the Empire of the Mauryas till the downfall of the Imperial Guptas, Allahabad and its immediate neighbourhood formed the western limit of the use of the Gupta alphabet. The western

[1] J. A. S. B. (N. S.), Vol. V, p. 253.

PLATE I.

Fragmentary Inscription on
image of Budha-Rajgir-
Patna (I M.)
No. N. S. 2.

limit is the most important one, as this was the only limit which changed its position. Upon the formation of a Western variety in the North-Eastern alphabet, this limit gradually receded eastwards. In the 8th century, Benares formed the eastern boundary of the Western variety, but in the beginning of the 11th century, we find that the limit has receded further East. In the 12th century, both varieties were being used in Magadha, as is shown by the Govindapur Stone Inscription of the Śaka year 1059,[1] and the Bodh-Gayā Inscription of Jayaccandra.[2] After the Muhammadan conquest, the Western variety gradually spread itself over the whole of South Bihār or Magadha, and the use of the Eastern variety was confined to the western limits of Bengal proper. The use of the Eastern variety, however, lasted in Magadha till the 14th century, when we find it in votive inscriptions, on flag-stones in the court-yard of the Great Temple at Bodh-Gayā,[3] and in a new inscription discovered by Mr. Lāl Bihāri Lāl Singh, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Bihār. The Gayā-*Prapitāmaheśvara* temple inscription of V. S. 1257 and the Umgā Hill inscription of Bhairavendra[4] ( V. S. 1496=1439 A.D. ) show that Nāgarī had entirely displaced the Eastern variety in Magadha.

In the north the snowy mountains formed the northern limit. But in the north-east the Bengali alphabet was adopted in Assam, where not only in the Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva, but also in other inscriptions, Bengali characters have been exclusively

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[1] Epigraphia Indica, Vol. II, p. 333

[2] Memoirs, A S. B , Vol. V, pl. xxxv.

[3] Cunningham's Archæological Survey Reports, Vol. I, Pl. II, Nos. 1 & 2.

[4] J. A S. B. (N. S.), Vol. II, p. 29.

used. In the Assam plates of Vallabhadeva of the Śāka year 1107=1185 A.D.[1] we find archaisms, which lurked in the backwoods of civilisation. In the east the Bengali script was also being used in Sylhet, where similar archaisms are to be met with in the Sylhet grants of Keśavadeva [2] and Īśānadeva.[3] In the south the Bengali script was used throughout Orissa. We find the proto-Bengali script in the Ananta Vāsudeva temple inscription of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva at Bhuvaneśvara, and the modern Bengali alphabet in the grants of the Gāṅga Kings Nṛsiṁhadeva II [4] and Nṛsiṁhadeva IV. [5] The modern cursive Oḍiyā script was developed out of the Bengali after the 14th century A. D. like the modern Assamese.

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[1] Epigraphia Indica, Vol. V, p. 183.
[2] Proceedings, A. S. B., 1880, p. 148.
[3] *Ibid*, p. 152.
[4] J. A S. B, 1896, Pt. I, p. 235
[5] *Ibid*, 1895, Pt. I, p 136.

# CHAPTER II

## The Northern Indian Alphabets (B.C. 350—A.D. 600).

### *A. The Older Maurya Alphabet.*

Leaving aside the various theories about the origin of the ancient Indian alphabet, we turn to examine it as it has been found to exist at the beginning of the historical period. It is sufficient for the purpose of the present article that Dr. Bühler recognised the antiquity of the Indian Alphabet in Aśoka's time. "The existence of so many local varieties, and of so very numerous cursive forms, proves, in any case, that writing had had a long history in Aśoka's time and the alphabet was then in a state of transition." [1] The alphabet is also recognised to be "a script framed by learned Brāhmaṇs for writing Sanskrit."[2] The earliest Indian inscription is the record on the Piprāwā vase discovered in 1898. It can be proved on palæographical grounds that the forms of Brāhmī letters used in incising this record are older than those of Aśoka's inscriptions. The vases found in the Stūpa at Piprāwā contained according to one authority the relic (*Śarīra*) of Buddha himself,[3] and according to another, those of his kinsmen of the Śākya clan.[4] It has been surmised that the stūpa was raised over the relics of the Śākyas, who were slain by Viruḍhaka, King of Kośala, during the life-time of Buddha

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[1] Bühler's Indian Palæography (Eng. Ed.), p. 7.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 17.

[3] J. R. A. S., 1898, p. 388.

[4] J. R. A. S., 1905, p. 680.

himself. Consequently the date of the Piprāwā inscription must lie either in the 5th or the 4th centuries B.C. Palæographical evidence fully supports this conclusion: the archaic forms of the Brāhmī alphabet found on the Persian *sigloi*, which went out of the general use in Aśoka's time, are found to have been used in the inscription. An analysis, of the characters of this inscription, would be out of place here, as it does not properly belong to the Eastern variety of the Maurya alphabet. It serves to indicate the upper limit of the use of the alphabet of this period. The lower limit has been fixed by Bühler at 200 B. C.[1] The seals, found by Cunningham at Pātnā,[2] which according to Buhler belong to the period when Brāhmī was written boushophedon (βουστροφηδον), were really seal-matrices, like the Rohtāsgaḍh Rock seal-matrix of the *Mahāsāmantādhipati* Śaśāṅka.[3]

### *B. Varieties of the Older Maurya Alphabet.*

In 1896, Bühler admitted the existence of two distinct varieties of this alphabet, *viz* .—

(*i*) the Northern : to be found in the rock-edicts at Kālsi, the pillar-edicts at Allahabad, Rādhiā, Māthrā, Niglivā, Paḍeriā and Rāmpurwā, the minor rock-edicts at Bairāṭ, Sahasrām, the inscriptions of the Barābār caves and Sāñci and Sārnāth pillars ;

(*ii*) the Southern : to be found in the-rock edicts at Girnār, Dhauli and Jaugaḍa and the minor rock-edicts at Siddapura.

Bühler already noticed the existence of varieties, at this period, in the Northern Maurya alphabet. "Even

[1] Indian Palæography (Eng. Ed.), p 33

[2] Cunningham's Arch. Survey Report, Vol XV, Pl. III.

[3] Fleet's Gupta Inscriptions, p. 383, Pl. xliii B.

the writings in the northern versions are not quite homogeneous. The pillar edicts of Allahabad, Māthiā, Nighvā, Paḍeriā, Rādhiā and Rāmpurwā form a very closely connected set, in which only occasionally minute differences can be traced, and the edicts of Bairāṭ No. I, Sahasrām, Barābār and Sāñci, do not differ much. A little further off stands the Dhauli separate edicts (where Edict VII has been written by a different hand from the rest), the Delhi-Mirāṭ edicts and the Allahabad Queen's edict, as these show the angular *da*. Very peculiar and altogether different is the writing of the rock-edict of Kālsi, with it, some letters on the coins of Agathocles and Pantaleon (but also some in the Jaugaḍa separate edicts), agree. Perhaps, it is possible to speak also of a North-Western variety of the older Maurya alphabet."[1]

Thus Bühler distinguishes three different sub-varieties in the Northern Maurya alphabet. According to their geographical distribution, they may be classified as follows —

(*a*) The North-Eastern—found in the Allahabad, Rādhiā, Māthiā, Rāmpurwā, Nighvā, Paḍeriā and the Sārnāth pillar edicts. The Earthen seals found at Pāṭnā[2] (seal matrices bearing the inverted inscriptions *Naṁdāya* and *Agapalaśa*) as well as that found by Cunningham at Bodh-Gayā[3] (*Mokhalinam*) belong to this period.

(*b*) The North-Central—found in the rock-edicts at Bairāṭ and Sahasrām, the pillar-edicts at Sāñci and Delhi and the cave-inscriptions at Barābār

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[1] *Ibid*, p. 34

[2] Cunningham's Archæological Survey Rep., Vol XV, Pl. III. 1, 2.

[3] Cunningham's Mahabodhi, Pl. XXIV, p. 1.

(*c*) The North-Western—represented by the characters of the Kālsi rock-edicts and the letters on the coins of the Greek kings Agathocles and Pantaleon.

In this paper we are concerned only with the North-Eastern variety, of the older Maurya-alphabet, and such inscriptions of the Northern Central variety as are to be found in North-Eastern India. A detailed description of the older Maurya alphabet would also be out of place here, as it is not yet possible to improve upon Dr. Bühler's admirable description of it. Consequently, one has to remain content, simply with the noting of the peculiarities of the alphabet as found in different inscriptions. Among vowel signs the only letter to be noted is the initial *i* which has been found in one of the inscriptions on the railings around the great temple at Bodh-Gayā, where Bühler reads *Īdāgimitasa* for *Iṁdāgimitasa* read by Cunningham.[1] But in reality, the characters of this inscription belong to the younger Maurya alphabet, as shown by Bloch. Among the consonants the form of *kha* found in one of the inscriptions at Bodh-Gayā,[2] with a triangle as its base, should be noted, but this inscription also, belongs to the younger Maurya alphabet. The only instance of *ṇa*, among the inscriptions of this period, is to be found in the mason's marks on the pillars of Buddha's walk, inside the temple enclosure at Bodh-Gayā. *Cha* with two loops, one on each side of a vertical straight line, instead of a circle divided into two unequal parts, have also been found among the mason's marks on the pillar-bases of Buddha's walk. The usual form of *ja*, is the Northern form with a loop or a dot. Other letters do not call for special attention but forms of the test letters *ya*, *la*, *sa* and *ha* may be noted. The form of *ya* is essentially the Northern one, which Bühler calls

[1] Mahābodhi, Pl. X, Nos. 9 and 10

[2] *Ibid*, Pl. X, No. 5.

the "notched *ya*." The form of *la* is generally cursive. One important exception is to be found, in the extremely cursive form, used in the Jaugaḍa separate edicts, which is essentially the same to be found in the Eastern variety of the Early Gupta alphabet of the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. The position of the Jaugaḍa edict is somewhat peculiar. The edicts of Dhauli and Jaugaḍa, though relegated to the Southern variety of the older Maurya alphabet, stand in an intermediate position. "The Southern variety is most strongly expressed in the Girnār and Siddapura edicts, less clearly in the Dhauli and Jaugaḍa edicts by differences in the signs for *a*, *ā*, *kha*, *ja*, *ma*, *ra*, *sa*, the medial *i*, and the ligatures with *ra*."[1] Most probably, the cursive forms of *ka* and *la*, found in the Jaugaḍa separate edicts, were imported from Northern India, as will be seen later on. In the North-Eastern variety, the usual form of *ha* is also cursive. The extremely cursive form of this letter, in the Jaugaḍa separate edicts, is peculiar and an importation from the North.[2] This statement is corroborated by the discovery of a slightly different cursive form in the Allahabad separate edicts, line 1 in the word *mahāmāla*.

### C. *The Younger Maurya Alphabet.*

The last eight columns, of Plate II of Bühler's tables, represent the younger Brāhmī alphabet of Northern India. The letters are taken from six series of inscriptions—

(*i*) The Nāgārjunī cave-inscriptions of Daśaratha, *ca.* 200 B.C.

(*ii*) The inscriptions on the *Toraṇas*, railing-pillars and cross-bars of the Bhārhut Stūpa, *ca.* 150 B.C.

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[1] Ind Palæo. (Eng Ed), p. 34

[2] Burgess, Stūpa of Amarāvatī, p 125.

(*iii*) The cave inscriptions at Pabhosa in the United Provinces, *ca.* 150 B.C.

(*iv*) The oldest inscriptions from Mathurā. These letters are principally taken from the oldest inscriptions discovered by Dr. A. Führer during the excavations at *Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā*, but the most ancient inscription from the district of Mathurā was discovered by Cunningham at Parkham. This inscription is incised on the base of a mutilated image of Yakṣa, at present in the Archæological Museum at Mathurā[1]. Most probably its characters belong to the younger Maurya alphabet.

(*v*) The Hāthigumphā inscription of Khāravela of Kaliṅga, *ca.* 160 B. C.

(*vi*) The Nānāghāṭ inscriptions of the Andhras, *ca.* 150 B. C.

Among these, only the Nāgārjunī cave-inscriptions of Daśaratha can be said to belong to the North Eastern variety. During subsequent years one other group has been added to the above list:

(*vii*) The inscriptions on the railing-pillars around the great temple at Bodh-Gayā. The late Dr. Theodor Bloch drew attention to the fact that "the older part of the Bodh-Gayā railing was put up in the middle of the 2nd century B. C., about 100 years after the time of Aśoka".[2] The cave-inscriptions of Daśaratha are about half a century older than those on the railing pillars at Bodh-Gayā The following points are worth noting on the alphabet of the cave inscriptions:—

(1) the form of *la* closely resembles, that of the extremely cursive one, found in the Jaugaḍa separate edicts (see *ante* p. 14);

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[1] Cunningham, A. S R, Vol XX, p 41, Pl VI; Vogel, Cat of Arch Museum at Mathurā, 1910, p. 83, C I

[2] Annual Rep Arch. Surve yof India, 1908-9, p. 147

PLATE II.

Fragmentary Kusana Inscription-Rajgir-Patna (I. M. No. 6283).

(2) the form of lingual *ṣa* is peculiar and resembles the form found in the Kālsi edicts, probably, it was the precursor of the looped lingual *ṣa* found in Eastern India in the 4th or 5th centuries A.D.;

(3) the form of *ka* is primitive and resembles that of the Siddapura edicts;[2]

(4) the form of *ṣa* shows an advance—the upper hook has been lengthened to form a slightly slanting second horizontal line.

The form of the remaining letters in Column XVII of Plate II of Bühler's work does not call for remarks. The inscriptions on the railing-pillars and cross-bars at Bodh-Gayā exhibit further changes, though they were incised only about fifty years after Daśaratha's time :—

(*a*) *a* shows two forms. In the word *Amoghasi* the first letter is decidedly of southern appearance[1] (*e.g.* Pl. II, Col. VIII, 1.); the other form is to be found in the various inscriptions of the noble lady *Kuraṅgi* and resembles that used in the Hāthigumphā inscriptions (Pl. II, Col. XXI, 1);

(*b*) *ka* has invariably the dagger-shaped form which was current up to the end of the 6th century A.D. and was formed by the elongation of the vertical line of the older Maurya form, cf. *ka* in *Tabapanaka*[2], *Kuraṅgiye*[3], *Sakaputrasa*[4], *Cetika*[5];

(*c*) *kha* occurs once only, in *Bodhirakhitasa*[6] where it resembles the form used in the oldest inscription in Mathurā (Pl. II, Col. XX, 10); there is a very slight difference between these two forms, the Eastern variety form as found in the Bodh-Gayā inscription, being slightly longer than that of the Western variety;

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[1] Bühler's Indian Palæography, p. 36. [4] *Ibid*, Pl. X, 4—7, 9—10.
[2] Cunningham's Mahābodhi, Pl X, 2. [3] *Ibid*, Pl. X, 3.
[5] *Ibid*, Pl. X, 10. [6] *Ibid*, Pl. X, 9, 10. [7] *Ibid*, Pl. X, 3.

(*d*) *ga* occurs several times in the name *Kuraṅgi*[1] where it has two varieties :—(1) cursive as in Pl. X, p. 4 and (2) the angular as in Pl. X, 6-7 ;

(*e*) *gha* also occurs only once in *Amoghasa*[2] ; its appearance shows great change, though it resembles one of the forms used in the Kālsi edicts (Pl. II, Col. 3-12) ; it is, on the whole, different from the form to be found in the North-Eastern variety of the early Maurya alphabet;

(*f*) *ca* occurs twice in *Cetiku*,[3] but its form does not show much difference from that of the older Maurya one ;

(*g*) two forms of *ja* are to be found in these inscriptions:—(*i*) one form resembles the *ja* in Bühler's Pl. II, Col. X, 15, while (*ii*) the other form is the usual older Maurya one with a dot in place of the central loop ;

(*h*) *ta* resembles the southern form in Bühler's Pl. II, Col. VII, 23 and the usual form of later Brāhmī inscriptions,

(*i*) *da* occurs in all of the inscriptions discovered on the pillars, copings and cross-bars of the Bodh-Gayā railing, and resembles the angular form of the older Maurya alphabet (Buhler Pl. II, Col. V-VI, 23);

(*j*) *dha* occurs once only in *Bodhivakhitasa* ; there is no change in the form of this letter from the 3rd century B.C. till the 10th or 11th century A. D. ,

(*k*) *na* also occurs in all of the inscriptions from Bodh-Gayā and its base line shows no curvature at all, proving that these inscriptions cannot be placed later than the 2nd century B. C. ;

(*l*) *pa* shows a greater degree of change ; in all cases of its occurrence, it shows two well-formed right angles, at its lower extremeties ; cf. *Tabapunakasa*,[4] *Sakaputrasa*, *Jivāputrāye*,[5] *Pājāvātiye*, *Jivāputrāye* and *Pāsādā*[6].

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[1] *Ibid*, Pl. X, 4—7, 9—10.

[2] *Ibid*, Pl. X, 2.

[3] *Ibid*, Pl. X, 9, 10

[4] *Ibid*, Pl. X, 3.

[5] *Ibid*, Pl. X, 9.

[6] *Ibid*, Pl. X, 10.

(*m*) the form of *ba* shows no change;

(*n*) two forms of *ma* have been found in these inscriptions :—(1) *ma* with a circle at the lower part and a semi-circle over it, as in *Amoghasa*[1] and (2) *ma* with a triangle at the lower part and a right angle over it, as in *Mitrasa*[2];

(*o*) two forms of *pa* also are to be found. the first form is the notched one, which is to be found on the coping inscriptions only,[3] and the second form, that with the curve below, is to be found in pillar-inscriptions[4];

(*p*) *ra* is always represented by a curved line;

(*q*) *va* shows the formation of a triangle at its base in the place of the circle,

(*r*) two forms of the dental *sa* are to be found: on one of the inscribed cross-bars, we find a slight curve to the left, attached to the lower extremity of the lower hook, cf. *sa* in *Amoghasa*; the other form is the usual older Maurya one, where in some cases, the elongation of the lower hook, marks a slight modification;

(*s*) *ha* has been found only once in the inscription recently discovered by the late Dr. Bloch, where it occurs in a ligature. The form of this letter, in the word *Brahmamitra*[5] is extremely cursive and shows that this hooked form is peculiar to the eastern variety of the older alphabets of Northern India;

(*t*) The newly discovered inscription has supplied a new letter *ña* which is to be found in the first word in *rāño*, and resembles the form in the Bhārhut and the Pabhosa alphabets with a downward elongation of the left vertical line.

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[1] *Ibid*, Pl X, 2

[2] *Ibid*, Pl. X, 9—10

[3] *Ibid*, Pl. X, 9—10.

[4] *Ibid*, Pl. X, 4—7

[5] Annual Rep. Arch. Survey of India, 1908—09, p. 247.

No inscription, which can safely be assigned to the 1st century B. C. or A. D., has been found anywhere in North-Eastern India, except at Sārnāth. The records which can be assigned to the 1st century B. C. are very few in number:

(*i*) Inscription on the upper side of the lower horizontal bar of the stone-railing surrounding the old stūpa in the south chapel of the main shrine [1]. The second half of the inscription only, is of earlier date, the first half belonging to the second century A. D. (not the 3rd or 4th as Messrs. Konow and Marshall imagine). The date of the second half also has not been correctly given. It is impossible to assign it to the 2nd century B. C. The shortening of the verticals in *pa* and *ha*, as well as the curvature in the base line of *na*, indicates that the record must be assigned to the 1st century B. C.

(*ii*) "When clearing the south chapel, the top of a stone railing became visible above the floor * * * a short votive inscription on one of the stones, places the erection of the railing in or before the 1st century B.C."[2] Here also the second part of the inscription only can be referred to the first century B.C. This part consists of the word "*Parigahetāvaṁ*".

(*iii*) Inscriptions on the pillars of a railing around a votive stūpa.[3] The first of these inscriptions (No. III) probably belongs to the 2nd century B.C. The probable reading is :—*Sīhāye Sāhijāteyikāye thabho*. The second inscription (No. IV) has been very badly preserved. The fac-simile shows :—

1. ...*niya Sonade* (*va*).

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[1] Annual Report of the Archæological Survey of India, 1906—07, p. 96, No. IV.

[2] *Ibid*, 1904-5, p. 68, Pl. XXXII, No. IX.

[3] *Ibid*, Pl. XXXII, Nos. III and IV, p. 102.

2. *Thabho dāna* (*m*).

"The pillar-gift of Sonadeva (*Suvṛṇadeva*) of....." Inscription No. II which ends with the word "*Dānaṁ thabho* undoubtedly belongs to the early Maurya period of the 3rd century B. C.

(*iv*) Inscription on a rail stone (? cross bar) :— *Bharinye Sahaṁ Yateyikā* (*ye*)[1]—the gift of Yateyikā with Bharini. This inscription also belongs to the 1st century B.C., as indicated by the form of medial *i* and the shortening of the verticals in *ya*.

(*v*) Inscription of the king Aśvaghoṣa, the year 40. incised on the pillar of Aśoka .... ....." " . ..... *rparigeyhe rājña Aśvaghoshasya chatariśe Savachhare hemataṇkhe prathame divase dasame.*"[2] Certain words following the above record, have been read by Dr. Venis as follows : *Sutithage 4, 200, 9.*[3] Drs. Fleet and Venis hold that this date should be referred to the *Mālava-Vikrama* era and arrive at 111-151 A.D. as the date of Aśvaghoṣa. If Drs. Fleet and Venis be correct, then it shall have to be admitted that, *Kaṇiṣka, Huviṣka* and *Vāsudeva* reigned in the latter half of the second and third centuries A.D., because in a treatise on Palaeography, it is impossible to admit, that the group of Kusāṇa inscriptions, came before those of *Aśvaghoṣa*, the *Kṣatrapas Nahapāna* and *Śoḍāsa*, and the archaic inscriptions from Mathurā.

(*vi*) Fragmentary inscriptions of the time of Aśvagho a :—

1. *Rājña Aśvaghoṣa* (*sya*) ..

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[1] *Ibid*, 1906-7, p 95. No. II, Pl. XXX.

[2] Ep Ind Vol, VIII, p. 171.

[3] J. R. A S., 1912, pp. 701-707.

2. *Upala he ma* (*mhupakhe* ?)[1] .....

The principal characteristics of the above inscriptions from Sārnāth are :—

(*i*) total absence of any difference from the forms of the characters of the 1st and 2nd centuries B. C. found in North-Western India ;

(*ii*) consequently we find the general shortening of vertical lines, angularisation of curved strokes, and in the case of medial vowel signs, cursiveness of the angular forms of the older Maurya Brāhmī.

*D. Kuṣāṇa Inscriptions.*

Under the above title the inscriptions of the great Kuṣāṇa Kings, Kaṇiṣka, Huviṣka and Vāsudeva are to be considered, the dates in whose inscriptions are generally taken to be Śaka dates.[2] At present two theories are current about the dates used in the inscriptions of the Kuṣāṇa kings mentioned above.

(*i*) That the dates in the Ku aṇa incriptions should be referred to the Mālava-Vikrama era which was established by Kaṇiṣka in the year 57 B. C. The expounders of this theory hold that the inscriptions of the Satraps Śoḍāsa and Rañjuvula fall after those of Kaṇiṣka, Huviṣka and Vāsudeva in the chronological order. This fact cannot, for a moment, be considered to be true, in a paper on Palæography.

(*ii*) That the dates in the Kuṣāṇa inscriptions should be referred to the Śaka era, which was founded by Kaṇiṣka in the year 78 A.D. In the following pages I have adopted this theory, which was started by Oldenberg

[1] Ep. Ind., Vol., VIII, p. 172.

[2] Buhler's Indian Palæography (Eng. Ed.), p. 40 and Ind. Ant., Vol XXXVII, p 25

and Fergusson, adopted by Bühler and Rapson, defended by myself and finally accepted by Mr. V. A. Smith. The inscriptions of the Ku āṇa period (1st and 2nd centuries A D.) are more abundant in North-Western India. On this point Bühler says: "The next step in the development of Brāhmī of Northern India is illustrated by the inscriptions from the time of the Kuṣāṇa kings Kaniṣka, Huviska and Vāsuṣka-Vāsudeva, the first among whom made an end of the rule of the older Śakas in the Eastern and Southern Punjab The inscriptions with the names of these kings which run from the years 4 to 98 (according to the usually accepted opinions, of the Śaka era of A.D. 77-78, or of the 4th century of the Selukid era) are very numerous in Mathurā and its neighbourhood, and are found also in Eastern Rājputānā and in the Central India Agency (Sāñci)." [1]

In subsequent years a number of inscriptions have been discovered in North-Eastern India, which can without doubt be referred to this particular period .—

(*i*) the Bodh-Gayā Fragmentary inscription on the diamond throne (*vajrāsana*) ;[2]

(*ii*) the Sārnāth Umbrella-staff inscription of the 3rd year of Kāṇiṣka ;[3]

(*iii*) the inscription on the base of the Bodhisattva Image dedicated in the 3rd year of Kaṇiṣka ;[4]

(*iv*) the inscription at the back of the Bodhisattva image of the 3rd year of Kāṇiṣka ;[5]

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] Cunningham's Mahābodhi, p 58.

[3] Epi. Ind., Vol VIII, p. 176.

[4] *Ibid*, p. 179.

[5] *Ibid.*

(*v*) inscription on the pedestal of an image of Bodhisattva from Sāhet Māhet (the ancient Śrāvastī);[1]

(*vi*) inscription on an umbrella-staff, now in the Indian Museum, probably found in the ruins of Sāhet Māhet;[2]

(*vii*) inscription on the pedestal of an image of Bodhisattva found at Sāhet Māhet;[3]

(*viii*) fragmentary inscription on a fragment of a sculpture discovered at Rājagṛha (*Rājgir*), in the Pātnā District;[4]

(*ix*) fragmentary inscription on the pedestal of an image discovered at Rājagṛha;[5]

The records of the 1st century A.D. fall into two distinct and separate classes.—

I. *The Eastern variety of the North-Indian Alphabet of the Kuṣāṇa period, earlier variety.* All the inscriptions enumerated above belong to this class. Six years ago, I stated, that inscription No. VIII belongs to the class of Epigraphs known as inscriptions written in the Northern-Kṣatrapa alphabet, but now I agree with Dr. Vogel in calling them by the new name "*Early Kuṣāṇa.*" Inscription No. I. is by far the oldest inscription of the Kuṣāṇa period, discovered up to date, in North-Eastern India. It was incised on the edge of a slab of stone, which is at present lying under the Bodhi tree, at Bodh-Gayā.[6] It was in a very bad state of preservation

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[1] Arch. Survey, Rep., Vol I, p 339 f; J R A S., N S., Vol. V, p. 192 J. A S. B, 1898, p. 274 and Ep. Ind., Vol. VIII, p. 179

[2] Epi. Ind., Vol IX, p. 290.

[3] Annual Rep Arch Survey of India, 1908-9, p. 133

[4] Ind., Ant, Vol. XXXVIII, p. 49.

[5] Annual Rep Arch. Survey of India, 1905-6, pp 105-6.

[6] Cunningham's Mahābodhi, Pl. X, ii; XIII and XIV.

Inscription of the time of Mahendrapala-Ramgaya-Gaya.

at that time and has since suffered much from the weather. When I examined the stone in 1906, I found that the fragmentary inscription, was almost illegible. The use of the broad-backed *śa*, the shortening of the verticals in *pa*, and the *ma* in which the lower part is invariably triangular in form, show that the inscription belongs to the early Kuṣāṇa period. Yet, the doubtful *ya* in the opposite corner of the inscription, which is archaic in form, proved that the record must be referred to a period slightly earlier than those, in which the later, fully developed tripartite form of *ya* is found to be used.

II. *The Eastern variety of the North-Indian Alphabet of the Kuṣāṇa period, later variety.* No inscription, which can be safely referred to this class, has been discovered as yet in any part of North-Eastern India.

The principal characteristics of the earlier variety of the North-Eastern Kuṣāṇa alphabets are :—

(*i*) the use of the broad-backed *śa* :—*daṇḍaśca* and *Śāvastiye* (L. 2 Śrāvastī image-inscription, Indian Museum), *daṇḍaśca* (L. 7), *Śāvastiye* (L 8) of the Indian Museum umbrella-staff inscription, *Śivadharasya*, *Śrāvāstā* (L. 1), *kuśalā*, *bhuyaḥnśalaṁ*, and *Śivamitrena* (L. 3) of the new Bodhisattva image-inscription from Sāhet Māhet, *Śakyamuni*, on the fragmentary sculpture from Rājgir; *Indraśiri* and *Parahuśalika* (L. 2) in the inscription on the newly discovered pedestal from Rājgir;

(*ii*) the lingual *ṣa*, angular in form in which the cross-bar does not reach the left vertical line. *Kaniṣkasya* (L. 1), *bhikṣusya*, *Puṣya* (L. 2), *yaṣṭi* and *pratiṣṭhāpito* (L. 4), kṣatrapena (L. 8), *pariṣā* (L. 9) of the Sārnāth Umbrella-staff inscription, *pratiṣṭhāpito* (L. 1), *kṣatrapena*, *mahākṣatrapena* and *Vanaspatena* in (L. 2) of the

and (*iii*) the Western variety—angular monumental type.[1]

In the light of later discoveries, especially the important finds of the British and Prussian expeditions into Central Asia under Sir Marc Aurel Stein, Grünwedel and others, the Northern Indian alphabet of the 4th and 5th centuries A. D., should be divided into the following varieties :—

1. The Eastern variety : specimens —
   - (*i*) the Allahabad pillar-inscription of Samudragupta,
   - (*ii*) the Udayagiri cave-inscription of Candragupta II,
   - (*iii*) the Gaḍhwā fragmentary inscriptions of the times of Candragupta II and Kumāragupta I,
   - (*iv*) the Dhānāidaha grant of Kumāragupta I,
   - (*v*) the Mānkuwār inscription of Kumāragupta I,
   - (*vi*) the Bihār pillar-inscription of Skandagupta,
   - (*vii*) the Kosām image-inscription of Bhīmavarman,
   - (*viii*) the Kahāuṁ pillar-inscription of Skandagupta.
2. The Western variety : specimens —
   - (*i*) the Mathurā inscription of Candragupta II,
   - (*ii*) the Sāñcī inscription of Candragupta II,
   - (*iii*) the Bharaḍi Ḍiḥ or Kaiamdaṇḍa inscription of Kumāragupta I,
   - (*iv*) the Bhiṭāri pillar-inscription of Skandagupta,
   - (*v*) the Indore grant of Skandagupta,
   - (*vi*) the Erān pillar-inscription of Budhagupta.

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[1] *Ibid*

3. The Southern variety: specimens —

(*i*) the Bilsaḍ pillar-inscription of Kumāragupta I,

(*ii*) the Gangdhar inscription of Viśvavarman,

(*iii*) the Mandaśor inscription of Kumāragupta I, and Bandhuvarman,

(*iv*) the Vijayagaḍh inscription of the *Yaudheyas*

(*v*) the Vijayagaḍh pillar-inscription of Viṣṇuvardhana,

(*vi*) the Girnār (Junagaḍ) Rock inscription of Skandagupta.

4. The Central Asian variety: specimens —

(*i*) the Bower Manuscript,

(*ii*) numerous other manuscripts written in the Central Asiatic variety of the Gupta alphabet discovered by the British and German expeditions.

## *I. The Eastern Variety.*

Twenty-one years ago, five years before the publication of Dr. Bühler's work on Indian Palæography, Dr. A. F. R. Hoernle recorded the following observations on the Indian script of the 4th and 5th centuries A. D.: "There existed at the time of the Gupta period two very distinct classes of the ancient Nāgarī alphabet, North Indian and the South Indian. The test letter for these two great classes is the character for *m*. The Northern class of alphabets, however, is again divided into two great sections which, though their areas overlapped to a certain extent, may be broadly, and for practical purposes sufficiently, distinguished as the Western and Eastern sections. The test letter in this case is the cerebral sibilant

*sha* (*ṣa*)"[1] This classification was also adopted by the late Dr. Bühler, who added two more test letters: *la* and *ha*. "The differences between the Eastern and Western varieties of the so-called Gupta alphabet appear in the signs of *la*, *ṣa* and *ha*. In the Eastern variety, the left limb of *la* is turned sharply downwards: cf. the *la* of the Jaugaḍa separate edicts. Further the base stroke of *ṣa* is made round and attached as a loop to the slanting central bar. Finally the base stroke of *ha* is suppressed, and its hook, attached to the vertical, is turned sharply to the left, exactly as in the Jaggayyapeta inscriptions. In the Western variety these three letters have the older and fuller forms." Another test letter, of the Eastern alphabet of this period, is the dental sibilant *sa*. In the inscriptions of the Eastern variety, this letter always has a loop at the end of its left vertical line instead of the customary curve or hook, *cf.* the form of the letter in the Allahabad pillar-inscription of Samudragupta. This form of *sa* has also been found in the inscriptions of the Kuṣāṇa period, discovered in Mathurā. The Kaṅkālīṭīlā inscription of the 25th year, shows that, in that inscription, all cases of *sa*, have this form.[2]

The characteristics of the epigraphic alphabet of the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. have already been discussed at length by Dr Bühler.[3] It will only be necessary to trace the history of the development of the Eastern variety in the following pages. In 1891, Dr. Hoernle perceived that, "in India proper, the North-eastern alphabet gradually came to be entirely displaced by the North-western alphabet, in comparatively very early times. This

[1] J. A. S. B., 1891, Pt. I, p. 81

[2] Epi. Ind., Vol. I, p. 384, No. v

[3] Bühler's Indian Palæography, Eng. Ed., p. 47.

displacement must have been in progress during the earlier part of the sixth century A D and must have been completed about 580 A D, for in 588 A.D, we already find inscriptions in Bodh-Gayā (inscription of Mahānāman, Fleet, p. 274), which show an exclusive North-Western character. There is not a single inscription known, so far as I am aware, about and after 600 A.D., which show the distinctive marks of the old North-Eastern alphabet."[1] This statement will have to be examined in the light of later discoveries made during the last two decades—

(*i*) The Dhānāidaha grant of Kumāragupta I, G.E. 113=432 A.D.[2]

(*ii*) The Mathurā Jaina image-inscription of the time of Kumāragupta I, G.E. 113=432 A.D.[3]

(*iii*) The Karamdaṇḍa image-inscription of Kumāragupta I, G.E. 117=436 A.D.[4]

(*iv*) The Amaunā plate of the Mahārāja Nandana, G.E. 232=531 A.D.[5]

(*v*) The Paṭiakellā grant of the Mahārāja Śivarāja; G.E. 283=602 A.D.[6]

(*vi*) The Gañjām grant of the time of Mahārājādhirāja Śaśāṅka, G.E. 300=619 A.D.[7]

(*vii*) The Muṇḍeśvarī inscription of Mahāsāmanta Mahāprātīhāra Mahārāja Udayasena, the Harsa year 30=636 A.D.[8]

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[1] J A. S B, 1891, Pt. I, p 82

[2] J A. S B. (N.S.), Vol V, p 459

[3] Epi Ind, Vol. II, p 210 No XXXIX

[4] J. A S B (N.S), Vol V, p 457, and Ep Ind, Vol X p 70

[5] *Ibid*, p. 49 and J A S B. Vol V, N. S p. 164

[6] Epi Ind., Vol. IX, p. 285.

Epi. Ind., Vol VI, p 141.

*Ibid*, Vol IX, p 289.

(*viii*) The Purī grant of Sainyabhīta-Mādhavarāja II.[1]

(*ix*) The Parikud grant of Madhyamarāja, the Harsa year 88=694 A.D.[2]

The Eastern variety of the epigraphic Alphabet of Northern India of the 4th and 5th centuries A.D did merge, as Dr. Hoernle has observed, into the Western variety. Inscriptions, discovered after the publication of Dr. Hoernle's article, show the gradual changes in the epigraphic alphabet of the 5th and 6th centuries A.D., and tend to prove that this change is already in evidence in the first half of the 5th century. This displacement of the Eastern variety of the alphabet of this period by the Western must have been completed before the end of the first half of the 6th century.

The Allahabad pillar-inscription of Samudragupta shows the fully developed form of the Eastern variety and the test letters can be observed here to their best advantage. The next inscription, in the chronological order, in which the Eastern alphabet has been used, is the Udayagiri cave-inscription of Candragupta II, on which Dr. Bühler observes "The fact that Fleet's No. 6 is found far west, near Bhilsā in Mālva, may be explained by its having been incised during an expedition of Candragupta II, to Mālva, at the command of his minister, who calls himself an inhabitant of Pāṭaliputra."[3] Next we come to two new inscriptions both of which were incised in the year 113 of the Gupta era=432 A.D.—

(*i*) The Mathurā Jaina image-inscription.

(*ii*) The Dhānāidaha grant.

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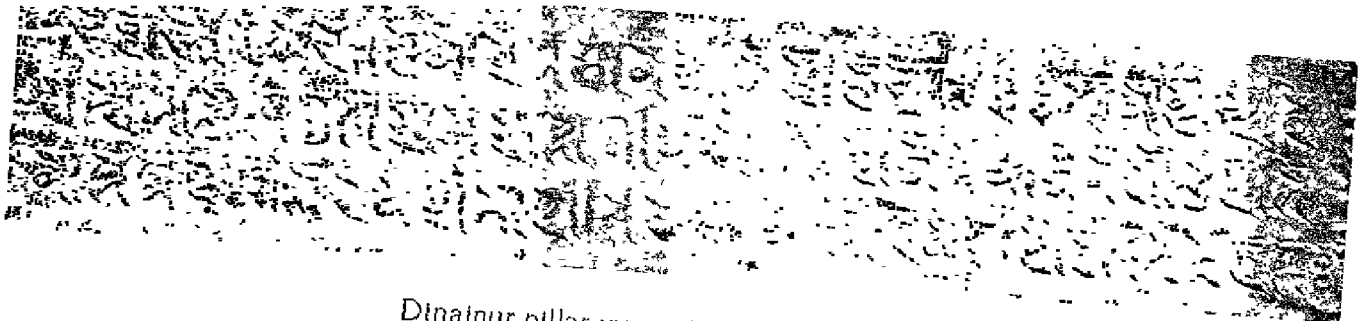
[1] J. A. S. B., 1904, Pt. I, p. 284, Pl. VI.

[2] Baṅgīya-Sāhitya-Pariṣad-Patrikā, Vol. XVI, p. 185, also Epi. Ind., Vol. XI, p. 281.

[3] Buhler's Indian Palaeography, Eng. Ed., p. 46



Dinajpur pillar inscription—Saka 888 (?)

As both of these records mention Kumāragupta I by name, so there cannot be any doubt as to their proper date. The Mathurā inscription shows the typical forms of the Western variety.[1] In the Dhānāidaha grant of Kumāragupta I, we find—

(*i*) in all cases, the looped form of the dental sibilant *śa*, has been used,

(*ii*) in all cases, the looped form of the lingual sibilant *ṣa*, has been used,

(*iii*) in all cases, the hooked form of *ha*, has been used,

(*iv*) in the majority of cases the hooked form of *la* has been used. In one solitary instance the Western variety form has succeeded in replacing the older one, *viz* —*Vakhalana* (?) in L. 8.[2]

But in a stone-inscription incised sixteen years later, we find Eastern variety forms of *śa*, *ṣa* and *ha* in all cases. In the Māṅkuwār inscription of Kumāragupta I, we see that *śa*, *sa* and *ha* have not changed in the year 129 G. E.=448 A D The discrepancy may be explained thus. The current script of a country, as found on copper-plates, generally shows a more advanced form than that of the Epigraphic alphabet, found in stone-inscriptions. Copper-plates, in ancient India, should be taken to belong to the same class of records, as paper manuscripts or papyri of other countries. The forms of the alphabet used in them should be distinguished from the forms used in epigraphs proper. Twelve years later than the date of this inscription, we find the Eastern forms of *ṣa*, *sa*, *la* and *ha* still persisting in all cases, in the Kahāuṁ pillar-inscription of Skandagupta, of

[1] Epi Ind., Vol II, p 210, No XXXIX

[2] J A. S B (N. S), Vol Pl. XX, p. 461.

G.E. 141=460 A.D. But in an undated inscription of the same king, we see that the Western forms are gradually taking the place of Eastern ones. In the Bihār pillar-inscription of Skandagupta, the first half of the record shows uses of Eastern forms in the majority of cases :—

I. *la*—(*i*) *tulya*, (*ii*) *atulyah* (L. 1), (*iii*) *atulya* (L. 3), (*iv*) *maṇḍalam* (L. 5), (*v*) *vyālamba* (L. 7), (*vi*) *lokān* (L. 9), (*vii*) *kāla* (L. 11)

II. *ha*—(*i*) *hi haiya* (L. 4), (*ii*) *gṛhaṁ* (L. 8);

Only in one instance we find a Western variety form, *viz* :—*agrahāre* (L. 13). But in the second half of the record, we find that the Western variety form of *ha* has invariably been used, in all cases. In the second half of this record there are two instances of *la* :—(*i*) *kulaḥ* (L. 28) and *saulkika* (L. 29), but as the facsimile given in Dr. Fleet's work is incomplete and does not contain these lines, it is not possible to compare the forms of *la* used in the second half of the inscription with those of the first half I have found that the Bihār pillar-inscription has suffered much from exposure in the weather, after the publication of Dr. Fleet's work, and at present it is not possible to get a clearer, and more complete, inked impression than the one taken for Dr. Fleet. On the clear evidence of the Bihār inscription of Skandagupta, we have the fact that Western forms were replacing the Eastern ones in the alphabet of North-Eastern India in the first half of the 5th century A.D. The Pāli grant of Lakṣmaṇa, of the Gupta year 158[1]=477 A.D., shows no form, in the alphabet used, which has any resemblance to those of the Eastern variety. The Pāli grant should be included among North-Eastern inscriptions, instead of North-Western ones, as it was found about thirty miles from Allahabad

[1] Epi. Ind. Vol II, p 363.

It may be mentioned that the Kosām image- inscription of Bhīmavarman, of the Gupta year 139=458 A.D., shows the use of eastern forms and the findspot of this record is close to Pāli. In this inscription, we find that, all the test letters, *ṣa*, *sa*, *ha* and *la*, have assumed Western forms. The evidence of the Pāli grant of Lakṣmaṇa is further borne out by the alphabet used in the Amaunā grant of Nandana, of the Gupta year 232[1]=551 A.D This inscription was discovered in the Gayā District of Bihar and Orissa and cannot be referred to any other class of inscription but the North-Eastern. In this inscription we find that *ṣa*, *sa*, *ha* and *la* are of the western variety. Consequently we are now in a position to reconsider the statement made by Dr. Hoernle twenty-one years ago: "This displacement must have been in progress during the earlier part of the 6th century A.D., and must have been completed about 580 A.D., for in 588 A.D., we already find inscriptions in Bodh-Gayā (Inscription of Mahānāman, Fleet, p. 274) which show an exclusive North-Western character."[2] We are now in a position to state definitely that the movement towards the adoption of Western variety forms in North-Eastern inscriptions was already in evidence in the 4th decade of the 5th century A.D. So early as the days of the Gupta emperor Skandagupta, the change had already affected the epigraphic alphabet of the time. The displacement was completed before the eighth decade of the 5th century and all traces of Eastern variety forms or characters had disappeared from the plains of Northern India, before the beginning of the 6th century A.D.

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[1] *Ibid*, Vol. X, p. 49

[2] J. A. S. B., 1891 pt. I, p. 82.

We should now proceed to the Palæographical examination of a class of records, about which there is much difference of opinion. I refer to the four copper-plate inscriptions, which have been discovered at various times during the last three decades. The first three was published by Mr. F. E. Pargiter in 1910[1] and the last one was published by myself[2] as well as by Mr. Pargiter[3] in 1911. In size, script and composition the four records indicate that they belonged to the same variety. These four grants differ from all other copper-plate inscriptions discovered in India on the following points :—

(*i*) they are not grants of lands, made by any paramount sovereign, nor by any feudatory chief, with the sanction of his suzerain,

(*ii*) they purport to be deeds of transfer of property, made by certain local officials, to a private person, as well as deeds of grants, made by those private persons to certain Brāhmaṇas ;

(*iii*) they mention a number of officials by their proper names, and not merely by designations, as usual.

The facts, quoted above, would alone go to prove that the records were spurious. But in addition to them, we have the palæographical evidence, which shows that the alphabets of two different periods and in the case of the last one, of three different periods, have been used in the composition of these inscriptions. In these records we find that, (1) *ṣa*, *la* and *ha* have two forms and often three ; and are used in conjunction with forms of the sixth or even of the seventh or ninth centuries A.D. In the first grant : the grant of Dharmāditya of the year 8, we find

[1] Ind. Ant., Vol XXXIX, p. 193.

[2] J A. S. B., Vol. VI. p 485.

[3] *Ibid*, Vol. VII, p. 476.

that two different forms have been used, in the case of three test letters *ṣa*, *la* and *ha*.

I. *Ṣa* :—

(*i*) *Eastern variety.*

1. *Ambarīṣa* (L. 1), 2. *viṣayapati* (L. 3), 3. *viṣaya-mahattara* (L. 4), 4. *Ghoṣacandra* (L. 5), 5. *kṣettra* (L. 7), 6. *viṣaye* (L. 8), 7. *viṣaye* (L. 10), 8-9. *kṣettrāṇi* and *kṣettra* (L. 11), 10. *dṛṣṭa* (L. 12), 11. *ṣaḍ-bhāgaḥ* (L. 13), 12. *abhilāṣa* (L. 14), 13. *ṣalaṅga*, (L. 19), 14. *modoneṣu* (L. 21).

(*ii*) *Western variety.* Strictly speaking, the forms of the letter, used in the following words, are much later in date than the North-Western Gupta alphabet. In all cases, the letter is found in the ligature *ksa* and we find that peculiar curvature before *ka* denoting the presence of the *ṣa*, which we see for the first time in the inscriptions of Ādityasena and those of the Gāhaḍavāla princes of Kanauj[1], in the 11th and 12th centuries A D. There are five instances of this later form in the first grant—

1. *kṣettra* (L. 16), 2. *anugrahākāṁkṣiṇā* (L. 18), 3. *kṣepa* (L 21), 4 *dakṣiṇena* (L. 23), 5. *kṣeṇī*. (L. 25).

II. *La* :—

(*i*) *Eastern variety.*

1. *lavdha* (L 2), 2. *kālusahha* (L. 5-6), 3. *durllabha* (*L.* 6), 4. *lābhah* (L. 13), 5. *saṁkalpābhih* (L. 14), 6. *Śīlakuṇḍaś=ca* (L. 214).

(*ii*) *Western Variety.*

1. *kāle* and 2. *vārakumaṇḍale* (L. 3), 3. *āluka* (L. 5), 4 *kuṇḍalipta* and 5. *kulasrāmi* (L. 6) 6.

[1] Bühler's Indian Palaeography, pl. IV, XVIII, 45 & pl. V, XII, XX, 44.

*mūlyaṁ* (L. 8), 7. *pustapāla* (L. 9), 8. *kulya* and *khaṇḍala* (L. 11), 10. *kalanā* (L. 12), 11. *abhilāṣa* (L. 14), 12. *nalena* (L. 16), 13. *dhruvilātyāṁ* (L. 16), 14. *kulya* (L. 16), 15. *kāla* (L. 18), 16. *ṣal-aṅga* (L. 19), 17. *uparilikhita* (L 20), 18. *anupālana* (L.21), 19. *pratipālanīyaṁ* (L. 22), 20. *liṅgāni* (L. 23).

*III. Ha* :—

(*i*) *Eastern variety.*

1. *vṛhac-caṭṭa* (L. 4), 2. *icchāmy-ahaṁ* (L. 7), 3. *brāhmaṇasya*, 4. *gṛhītvā* (L. 8), 5. *avadhṛtam*= *astī*=*ha* (L. 10), 6. *hastena* (L. 15), 7. *paratr*=*ānugraha* (L. 18), 8. *himasena* (L. 23).

(*ii*) *Western variety,*

1. *mahārājādhirāja* and 2. *mahārāja* (L. 2), 3. *mahuttara* (L. 4), 4. *tad-arhatha* (L. 8), 5. *mātā-pitror-anugraha* (L. 19), 6. *harel* (L. 26), 7. *himasena* (L. 25), 8. *saha* (L. 26).

Similarly in the second grant from Faridpur we find that—

I. In all cases the Western variety form of *ha* has been used.

II. The Eastern variety form of *la* has been used in one case only *e.g.* in *maṇḍala* (L. 4). In all other we find the Western variety forms—

1. *lavdha* (L. 3), 2. *kāle* (L. 4), 3. *gopāla* (L.5), 4. *khaṇḍalakaiḥ* (L. 9), 5. *lauhitya* (L. 11), 6. *kulya* (L. 14), 7. *akhila* (L. 15), 8. *satpālāni* (L. 17), 9. *khandalaka* (L. 17), 10. *pustapāla* (L. 18), 11. *dharmmaśīla* and 12. *nalena* (L. 19), 13. *liṅgāni* (L. 20), 14. *ślokāni* (L. 24).

The form in the last example is very late. It is the 9th century form, found for the first time in the Dighwā-Dubhauli grant of Mahendrapāla[1].

III. In the case of the lingual *ṣa* we find eastern variety forms in :

1. *Nahuṣa* (L. 1), 2. *Ambarīṣa* (L. 2), 3. *viṣaya* (L. 5), 4. *Jyeṣra* (L. 7), 5. *Somaghoṣa* and 6. *viṣayānāṁ* (L. 8) 7. *ṣaṣṭha* (L. 16) 8. *vṛkṣa* (L. 21), 9. *ṣaṣṭiṁ* and 10. *Varṣa* (L. 24), 11. *śra-viṣṭhāyāṁ* (L. 27) and western variety ones in .

1. *kṣettra* (L. 9), 2. *kṣet rāṇi* (L 14), 3 *ākṣeptā* (L. 25); another indistinct form is to be found in *hast-āṣṭaka.* The late seventh or eleventh century form of *kṣa* is found in *kṣettra* in L. 17.

The third plate is in a very bad state of preservation and the facsmile published with Mr. Pargiter's article is very indistinct , the reverse or the second side of the plate only, is capable of being analysed for palaeographical purposes. In it, we find, that in all recognisable cases, the lingual *ṣa* is of the Eastern variety of the early Gupta alphabet. Both forms of *ha* have been used. Only one instance of the Western variety is legible :—*maha* in L. 3. In all other instances where the record is legible we find the use of the Eastern variety :—(1) *mahattaraḥ* (L. 8-9), (2) *hastāṣṭaka* (L. 10), (3) *agrahāra* (L. 22), (4) *hartu* (L. 24), (5) *saha* (L. 25).

So also in the case of *la* we find that the Eastern variety form has been rarely used while the Western variety form is common :—

I. Eastern variety :—(*i*) *Vatsapāla* (L. 5), (*ii*) *liṅgāni* (L. 21).

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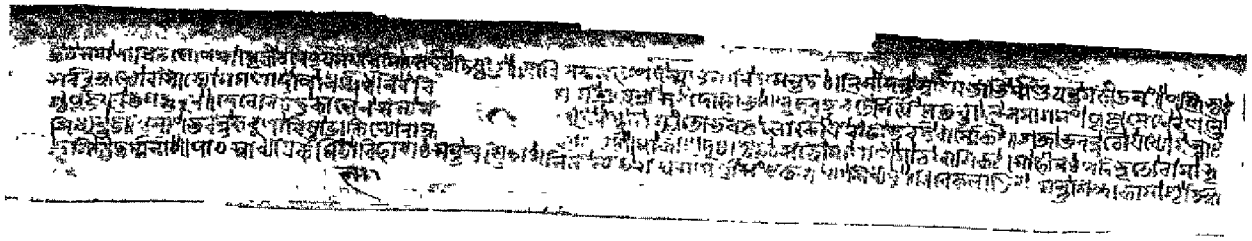
[1] Ind. Ant., Vol. XV, p. 112.

II. Western variety :—(*i*) *mūlyam* (L. 14), (*ii*) *kulavārān* (L. 18), (*iii*) *prakalpya* (L. 18), (*iv*) *dharmaśīla* (L. 19), (*v*) *nalena* (L. 19), (*vi*) *Vatsapāla* (L. 19), (*vii*) *kulya* (L. 20), (*viii*) *Dhruvilāta* (L. 22), (*ix*) *Śīlakuṇḍa* (L. 23).

It should be noted in this connection that in the majority of cases we find the bipartite form of *ya*. In the fourth grant we find, that in all cases the bipartite form of *ya*, the Western variety form of the lingual *ṣa* and *la* have been used. With the exception of three instances, *ha* also has the Western variety form. These three instances are :—(1) *vrāhmaṇ-opāya* (L. 11), (2) *vrāhmaṇa* (L. 14), (3) *sahasrāṇi* (L. 20-21). In addition to these, we find later forms, in the word *parkhaṭṭi* (L. 18) and *svāminaḥ* (L. 17). in case of *ka* and *na* respectively. In conclusion, we may freely say, that all four copper plates are forged. It may be asserted that, the plates belong to the transitional period, when Eastern variety forms were gradually being displaced by Western ones. But, the use of mediaeval forms, precludes such a possibility :—(1) I have already commented on the form of the ligature *kṣa* in the first plate. (2) Another, much later form, is that of *śa*, in the date of the first plate, which occurs for the first time in the Aphsaḍ inscription of Ādityasena and Dighwā-Dubhauli grant of Mahendrapāla, the Pratīhāra, of V. E. 955=898 A.D. The form of *ka* in *parkhaṭṭi* and *na* in *svāminaḥ* in the fourth grant had already been commented upon. Consequently we find that the four copper-plate inscriptions, being forgeries, are of no use in a palaeographical discussion.

PLATE V



Bodhicaryavatara ( Ms Ga 8067 ) Fol. 65, obv A S. B

# CHAPTER III

## The Eastern Alphabet—550-1100 A.D.

We now come to the class of alphabets, to which Dr. Bühler has given the name, *Siddhamātṛkā*. From this point, Dr. Buhler's work ceases to be exhaustive and does not deal with Eastern variety forms of the Northern alphabet, separately. Such a treatment of North-Indian palaeography was, perhaps, impossible sixteen years ago, and consequently, the author of the *Indian Palæography* was obliged to deal with the Northern Indian alphabet of the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th centuries A.D., as a single whole. The differentiation was made only in the case of Śāradā alphabet, which was already a separate unit in the 8th century A.D. and in a much later period, in the case of proto-Bengali. In these pages Dr. Bühler's arrangement has not been followed, on account of the following reasons :—

I. The discovery of a number of dated records, has made it impossible to accept, the alphabet used in the Bodh-Gayā inscription of Mahānāman, as representing type specimens of the North-Eastern alphabet of the 6th and 7th centuries A.D. These new inscriptions are :—

(*i*) the Amaunā grant of Nandana[1], G. E. 232=551 A.D.

(*ii*) the Paṭiakellā grant of Mahārāja Śivarāja[2], G. E. 283=602 A.D.

(*iii*) the Gañjām grant of the time of Mahārājādhirāja Śaśāṅka[3], G. E. 300=619 A.D.

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[1] Epi. Ind., Vol. X, p. 49.

[2] *Ibid*, Vol. IX. p 285.

[3] *Ibid*, Vol. VI p. 142

(*iv*) The Muṇḍeśvarī inscription of the Mahāsāmanta Mahāpratīhāra Mahārāja Udayasena[1], H. E. 30=636 A. D.

II. The final settlement of the chronology of the Gurjjara-Pratīhāra dynasty of Northern and Central India, by the researches of Mr. D. R. Bhandarkar and the late Mr. A. M. T. Jackson, has placed the introduction of the Nāgarī alphabet into Northern India one hundred and thirt-yseven years later. On this point Dr. Bühler said "In Northern and Central India, the Nāgarī appears first on the copper-plate of the Mahārāja Vināyakapāla of Mahodaya probably of A. D. 794."[2] The real date of Vināyakapāla's grant is V. E. 988=931 A. D. instead of H. E. 188=794 A. D.[3]

III. The discovery of a number of inscriptions in North-Eastern India, specially of the Pāla kings of Bengal, makes it possible to distinguish two different varieties of the North-Eastern alphabet, as early as the 8th century A. D., and shows that Nāgarī has had very little influence on the development of the Bengali alphabet.

Sixteen years ago, the Bodh-Gayā inscription of Mahānāman was the only known dated inscription of the 6th century A. D., in North-Eastern India. In it, Dr. Hoernle and Dr. Bühler, found, for the first time, that the Eastern variety of the early Gupta alphabet has been entirely displaced by the Western one. But, we have already seen, that fresh discoveries place this displacement more than a century earlier. The next point to be considered is the tripartite form of *ya* and the downward limit of its use. In 1891 Dr. Hoernle fixed 600 A. D. as the

[1] *Ibid*, Vol. IX, p. 289.

[2] Buhler's Indian Palæography, Eng. Ed., p. 51

Epi Ind., Vol. VIII, App. 1, pp. 1 & 4.

lowest limit for the use of this form of *ya* in Northern India :—

"Any inscription in the North-Western Indian alphabet, which shows the more or less exclusive use of the old form of *ya*, must date from before 600 A. D., while any inscription showing an exclusive use of the cursive form of *ya* must date after 600 A. D."[1]

The force of Dr. Hoernle's argument has been weakened by the discovery of the Udaypur inscription of the Guhila Aparājita[2], of V. E 716=659 A.D. "The discovery of an inscription of the 7th century", observes Dr. Bühler, "with mostly tripartite *ya*, E. I. 4, 29, makes a modification of Hoernle's argument necessary but does not invalidate his final result".[3] It will be observed that no limit has been fixed for the use of the tripartite form of *ya* in a North-Eastern inscription. In the Bodh-Gayā inscription of Mahānāman, we find that, the bipartite form had, entirely, displaced the tripartite one. Consequently, it has been supposed that the bipartite form has displaced the tripartite form, in the North-Eastern inscriptions, almost about the same time as in North-western records. Subsequent discoveries now enable us to prove beyond doubt that in North-eastern India, the use of the tripartite form of *ya*, lasted about half a century longer than the limit of North-western India. For example we have the form used in the Amaunā grant of Nandana. The date of this inscription is not far removed from that of the Bodh-Gayā inscription, and it was found in a place not very far off from Bodh-Gayā, yet we find that in all cases the tripartite form of *ya* has been used. So again, in the case of Paṭiākellā grant of Jivarāja, we find that

[1] J A S B, 1891, pt I, p. 90.

[2] Epi. Ind., Vol IV, p 29.

[3] Buhler's Indian Palæography, p 48 note 3.

the tripartite form is being used in all cases, in the Gupta year 283 = 602 A.D. So also in the case of the Muṇḍeśvarī inscription, we find that the tripartite form alone is used in 636 A. D. Consequently, we have to admit that the use of the bipartite form of *ya*, in the Bodh-Gayā inscription of Mahānāman, in the Gupta year 269 = 588 A.D., is premature. There are other reasons which lead us to believe that, though this record was found in North-Eastern India, the alphabet of the locality was not used in incising it, which on the other hand was done by a man from Western India. We have a similar case in the Bhitārī pillar-inscription of Skandagupta, which, though found in Eastern India, shows the use of the Western variety of the North-Indian alphabet; and the Sāñcī inscription of the time of Candragupta II which, though found in Western India shows the use of the Eastern variety of the alphabet. The alphabet used in the Bodh-Gayā inscription of Mahānāman cannot be taken to represent the ordinary Eastern variety of the Epigraphic alphabet of North-India in the 6th century A.D. for the following reasons :—

(1) the Amaunā grant of Nandana and the Paṭiākellā grant of Śivarāja show the exclusive use of the tripartite form of *ya*; consequently, we have to admit that in the Eastern variety of the Northern alphabet the tripartite form of *ya* was in use in the 6th century A.D.;

(2) the prevalence of acute angles at the lower extremities of letters is exceptional, and, not of common occurrence, in these records.

The ordinary 6th century epigraphic alphabet of North-Eastern India is then to be found in the following inscriptions :—

(1) the Amaunā grant of Nandana,

(2) the Paṭiākellā grant of Śivarāja,

(3) the Barābar cave-inscription of Ananta-varman,[1]

(4) the Nāgārjunī cave-inscription of Ananta-varman,[2] and

(5) the Nāgārjunī cave-inscription of Ananta-varman.[3]

The principal characteristics of the alphabet, which remained current in North-eastern India, from 550-650 A.D. are noted below :

(1) The use of the tripartite form of *ya*. The only exception is the Gañjām grant of the time of Śaśāṅka. The difference cannot be accounted for at present, so long as the riddle of Śaśāṅka-Narendra remains unsolved. Why Śaśāṅka, probably surnamed Narendra, whose coinage is allied to that of the early or the Imperial Guptas, went to Kaliṅga and how he came to be acknowledged as a suzerain, by the *Śailodbhava* princes of the *Koṅgoda-maṇḍala*,[4] is still a mystery to us. The introduction of the North-Eastern alphabet, into the Northern Sircars, was also probably due to this prince. We find the ordinary 6th century alphabet of Kaliṅga, in the Bugudā grant of Mādhavavarman[5] and the Parikuḍ plates of Madhyamarāja.[6]

(2) The general prevalence of right angles at the lower extremities of certain letters *e.g. gha, pa, pha, sa* and *sa*.

(3) The absence of later developments such as tails or verticals on the right of these signs.

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[1] Fleet's Gupta Inscriptions, p 221, pl XXX B

[2] *Ibid*, p. 224, pl. XXXI, A

[3] *Ibid*, p 227, pl. XXXI B

[4] Epi Ind, Vol. VI, p 142

[5] *Ibid*, Vol III, p 43 and Vol VII, p. 100

Vangīya-Sāhitya-Parisad-Patrikā, Vol XVI, p 197, Epi Ind, Vol XI, pp. 281-87.

In other words, the North-eastern epigraphic alphabet of the 6th century A.D., presents the ordinary characteristics of the North-western variety of the early Gupta alphabet.

Early in the latter-half of the 7th century A.D., we find a marked change in the North-Eastern alphabet. The Shahpur image-inscription of the Harṣa year 66 = 671 A.D. and the undated Aphsad inscription, both of the time of Ādityasena of Magadha, exhibit this change for the first time. From this time onward, the eastern variety of the northern alphabet, develops by itself and the western variety never succeeds in displacing it again. For a short time only, during the domination of the Gurjjara-Pratīhāra princes, a western variety, called Nāgarī, makes its influence felt and divides the eastern variety into two different branches. Out of these sub-divisions, the western one is gradually absorbed in Nāgarī, while the eastern one develops separately and becomes the Bengali script, of the 11th and 12th centuries A D At this period, it is necessary to take a more complete survey of the Eastern alphabet, than that done in the case of the Eastern variety of previous centuries. In the latter half of the 7th century A. D., we find the following characteristics of the eastern variety of the northern alphabet.—

1. Vowels.

(1) The upper part of the left limb of *a* has become a slightly elongated nail-head or wedge, while the lower part is converted into a regular curve, with a knob at its top, looking more like a comma. The right limb together with the line joining both the limbs, can be drawn at one stroke of the pen and the letter resembles the Bengali one, in its present form. Cf. *a* in *ajanayad* (in L. 6)

(2) In the case of *ā* we find the differentium in a second curve, also shaped like a comma, which is attached to the lower extremity of the right limb. Cf. the form in *āsīd* (in L. 1).

(3) In the case of the short *i*, we find the lower circle or dot of Gupta alphabet of the Western variety, which in Maukharī inscriptions becomes a short vertical curved line, developed at this period into a long curve, which, in two different cases, is shown to be of different lengths.

(4) In the case of *u*, we find the horizontal line at the lower extremity transformed into a curve and elongated. This form continues without alteration till the end of the 10th century A. D., when the first change in its form is found in the Bhagalpur grant of Nārāyaṇapāla.

(5) The rare *o*, becomes an elongated comma laid flat on its back. In the absence of the earlier forms of this letter of the 4th and 5th centuries A. D. comments are impossible. The only known forms are those found in the inscriptions of the Mahārājas of *Uchakalpa* and those of Yaśodharman, which belong to the Southern variety of the Gupta alphabet.

II. Consonants.

(1) For the first time in Eastern India, the first consonant, *ka* always has a loop on its left. The looped form, it should be noticed here, has also been found in the Gañjām plates of the time of Śaśāṅkarāja along with the bipartite form of *ya*. It continued in this form until the loop becomes a semi-circle, in the 11th century A.D.

(2) In *kha*, the triangle at the base of the letter, which is observable for the last time, in the cave-inscriptions of the Maukharīs, becomes transformed into a straight line and a curve. The sides of the triangle become a

semicircle while the base side becomes elongated and touches both extremities of the arc. This arc and its base line becomes the right limb, of this letter in the 7th century A. D. The left limb is formed by an increase in the length of the upper hook or curve, which was an open square in Maukharī inscriptions. There is a wedge, instead of a dot or a short straight line at the lower extremity of the left limb.

(3) In the case of *ga*, we find the open square form of the western variety, with its long right limb, again transformed into a curve, with a wedge at the lower extremity of its left limb.

(4) In *gha*, the curvature of the base line, was already observable in the Eastern variety of the early Gupta alphabet. In the sixth century, we see that in the inscription of Yaśodharman, the base line has become a curve on the left side and a slanting line to the right, forming an acute angle with the right vertical. In the Aphsad inscription, we find that, this letter has become something like the tripartite *ga* of the Kuṣāṇa and Gupta periods, the only differentia being the wedges on the top of its three limbs and the presence of an acute angle instead of a right angle, at its right lower extremity.

(5) In *ña* we find, the lower right angle is becoming, in some cases, an acute angle and the vertical straight line is transformed into a curve.[1]

(6) In *ca*, the two curves, of the Gupta period, are transformed into a triangle, with a wedge on its apex and a slight elongation of the base line or lower line towards the left.

(7) There is little or no change in the case of *cha* and the ligature *cha* shows that, the older form of *ca* is still being used in certain cases.

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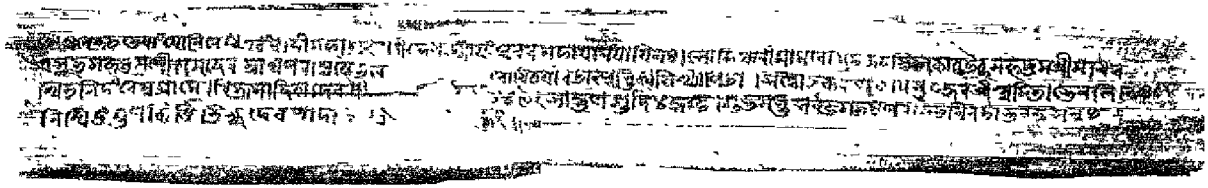
[1] Bühler's Indian Palaeography pl. IV, Col. XIX, 11

PLATE VI.



Bodhicaryavatara (Ms Ga 8067) Fol 65, Rev (A S B)

(8) In *ja* the curvature of the lower horizontal line was already perceptible in the Eastern variety form of the early Gupta alphabet The vertical was also perceptibly curved. Here we find the central horizontal line also curved to the same extent as the base or lower line. A wedge has been added to the right extremity of the upper horizontal line.

(9) There is only one instance of the occurrence of *jha* and it has exactly the same shape which *ma* has in the Allahabad pillar-inscription of Samudragupta.

(10) In the case of *ña*, it occurs in two ligatures, conjointly, with *ca* and *ja* ; the form *ñca*, does not differ much from that found in the Allahabad pillar-inscription of Samudragupta, but in the ligature *jñya* its form is still more cursive.

(11) In the case of *ṭa*, we find the Eastern variety differring very much from that of the Western. The *ṭa* in the Aphsaḍ inscription is merely an open curve, with a wedge placed horizontally at the upper end of the curve; but in the Western variety, as in the case of the *Lakkhamaṇḍala Praśasti*, it is a semi-circle with a serif, which is attached to the curve by means of a wedge.

(12) In the case of *ṭha* we find the ancient Maurya form still being used in Northern India without any change.

(13) In the case of *ḍa*, we see that the letter consists of two small curves. In the last line of Aphsaḍ inscription, in the word *Gauḍena*, we find a more archaic form, resembling the one used in the Allahabad pillar-inscription of Samudragupta ; the only difference being a slight shortening of the length. It may be mentioned in this connection that the word *Gauḍa* is found for the first time in Indian epigraphy, in the Aphsaḍ inscription, where it is

stated that the *Praśasti* was composed by *Sūkṣma-śiva*, a native of the *Gauḍa* country.[1]

(14) In the case of *ḍha*, we find the angle changed into a curve. Cf. the form in the inscriptions of Yaśodharman.[2]

(15) In the case of a *ṇa*, we see that the base line has become slanting, thus forming an acute angle at the right lower extremity, and the left hook has become lengthened. In the case of the ligature *ṇḍa*, the lingual *ṇa* has acquired a distinctly modern form, consisting simply of two curves.

(16) The lower right limb of *ta*, which was already elongated in the Gupta period, becomes slightly curved and we find a wedge at the top of this letter.

(17) In the case of *tha* occurs only once and its form, there is very indistinct *e.g. vimathito* (L. 7), but here we find the upper part of the letter distinctly broadened. In ligatures on the other hand, we find the older form still prevailing *e.g* in *stha* in *kumbhasthalī* (L.1).

(18) In *dha*, the small arc has changed into a semi-circle.

(19) In the case of *na*, we find that the looped form of the Early Gupta period has changed into one somewhat resembling the modern Nāgarī one The loop has become :—

(*a*) separated from the main body of the letter,

(*b*) smaller in size,

and (*c*) joined to the main body by a short horizontal stroke.

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[1] An earlier mention is to be found in the Haraha Inscription of Īśānavarman of [V. E.] 611, which has since been discovered.

[2] Bühler's Indian Palaeography, pl IV, X, 20.

(20) A still more cursive form is apparent in *pa* and the acute angle has become more pronounced. The right limb shows further downward elongation.

(21) In the Aphsaḍ column of Dr. Bühler's plates, *pha* has been omitted but it occurs among the ligatures *e.g.* Col. XIX, 45. It occurs many times and we have it thrice in the 25th line of the Aphsaḍ inscription:—*Sphaṭika*, *sphara* and *sphurat*.

(22) From this time onward we shall have to discard *ba* from the alphabet, as in Northern inscriptions, *ra* took the place of *ba* and its occurrence is occasional.

(23) In the Western variety of the early Gupta alphabet, the left hook of *bha* has changed into a solid wedge, and this wedge has developed into a hollow one, at the same time, separating the right limb of the letter from the upper part. So for all practical purposes, the distinction between *ha* and *bha* had ceased.

(24) In *ma* the acute angle, observable in the western variety alphabet of the early Gupta period, develops still more strongly and causes a downward elongation of the right limb.

(25) We find two varieties of *ya* in the Aphsaḍ inscription. In the first place, we have the bipartite form, with a clear acute angle at its lower extremity and in the second place, a later form, in which the acute angle is less prominent, but the downward elongated of the right limb has already assumed a settled from.

(26) In *ra*, we find for the first time, a pointed wedge or arrow-head, at the lower extremity, which is found earlier in inscriptions of the western variety *e. g.* the *Lakkhamandala Praśasti*[1] and the Bodh-Gayā inscription

[1] Ep. Ind., Vol. I, p. 12.

of Mahānāman. It is still more developed in the Aphsaḍ inscriptions where it resembles a *ḍa* of short stature.

(27) We find two forms of *la* also. In the first case, the curve or hook in the left limb of the letter has been lengthened downwards with a very slight outward curve at its lowest extremity. In the second case, we find the hook on the curve of the left limb, instead of being prolonged downwards, has acquired an inward length, very much resembling the modern Nāgarī and Bengali forms of the letter.

(28) The triangular *ra* of the early Gupta period suffers the same transformation as the triangle at the base of *kha* Two sides of the triangle are converted into a curve, while the third side is lengthened. A wedge is invariably to be found on the top of the letter.

(29) In *śa*, the upper part of the letter was a curve in the early Gupta alphabet, whether Eastern or Western. In the later western variety it changed to a rectangle. But in the Aphsaḍ inscription, we find, for the first time, the upper part consists of a loop, while the right lower limb has been elongated upwards.

(30) We find three distinct forms of *sa*.—

(*a*) The looped form which occurs in the Aphsaḍ inscription alone (cf. Buhler's tables, pl. IV, XIX, 38).

(*b*) The form in which the loop is changed into a hollow wedge (cf. Bühler's tables, pl. IV, XVIII, 38).

(*c*) In the third variety which is found exclusively in the Shahpur image-inscription of Ādityasena, the apex of the wedge has separated and ceased to be a wedge. This form is found in the 6th and 9th century inscriptions of north-eastern India.

(31) We find one form of *ha*, and the only changes noticeable are the elongation of the curve or hook in the right limb of the letter, and the introduction of the wedge at the top and the slanting of the hitherto horizontal base line.

The next inscription of the Eastern variety is the Deo-Baranark inscription of Jīvitagupta II, the great-grandson of Ādityasena. Most probably, this record was incised in the earlier part of the 8th century A. D. The following inscriptions of Eastern India may be taken as type-specimens for the 8th century A. D. :—

1. The Deo-Baranark pillar-inscription of Jīvitagupta II. We have a certain date for Ādityasena in the Shahpur image-inscription. Three full generations elapsed between him and Jīvitagupta II. If these generations be taken to be short and to have covered fifteen years on the average, we arrive at the 8th century A. D. as the date of Jīvitagupta II. Consequently it may be affirmed that the Deo-Baranark pillar was incised either in the first or the second decade of the 8th century A. D.

2. The Khālimpur grant of Dharmmapāla, the year 33[1].

3. The Bodh-Gayā image-inscription of the time of Dharmapāla, the year 26[2].

It is now quite certain that the reign of Dharmmapāla fell in the 8th century A. D., because he was a contemporary of —

(i) the king Indrarāja or Indrāyudha of Kanauj who is stated in the *Harivaṁśapurāṇa* to have been living in the Śaka year 705 = 783 A. D.,[3]

[1] J. A. S. B., 1894, pt. I, p 53, pl. III.

[2] *Ibid*, (N.S.) Vol. IV, p 102, pl. VI., Annual Rep Arch. Survey 1908-9, pp 148-50.

[3] Peterson's 4th Rep. on the Search for Skt. Mss in the Bombay Presy., pp. XLI and 176; Ind. Ant., Vol. XV, p 141.

(ii) a king named Cakrāyudha, whom he offered the throne of Kanauj, and who was defeated by the Gurjjara-Pratīhāra king Nāgabhaṭa II,

(iii) the Gurjjara-Pratīhāra chief Nāgabhaṭa II, for whom we have a certain date in the Buchkala inscription[1] of V. S. 872=815 A. D.,

(iv) the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Govinda III[2] whose certain dates range from 794—813 A.D.[3]

The Deo-Baranark inscription of Jīvitagupta II is in a bad state of preservation and the facsimile given in Dr. Fleet's work has not been well reproduced. We find here the forms of initial vowels have not changed. *Ka, ga, ca, ja, ṭa, ṭha, ḍa, da, dha, na, bha, ma, ya,* and *ha* also have not changed. We find changes in the cases of—

(1) *na,* in which we find the right hook or curve further lengthened downwards,

(2) in the case of *ta* also we find a similar increase in the downward length with a very slight, almost imperceptible, curve at its lower extremity,

(3) in *tha,* we find the top of the latter broadened, most probably due to "the elongation of the ends of the wedges and of the use of long straight strokes"[4], cf. *yathā* in (L. 14),

(4) we find two forms of *pa*: (*a*) the older form, in which the acute angle is still prevalent; and (*b*) in which the acute angle, though present, is less remarkable and has given place to a downward elongation of the right vertical line e.g. in the ligature *spa*

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[1] Epi. Ind., Vol IX, p 193.

[2] J B B. R A. S, Vol. XXII, No. LXI, p 128.

[3] Epi. Ind, Vol VIII, App. II, p 3.

[4] Buhler's Indian Palaeography, Eng. Ed., p. 53.

(5) in the case of *la*, we find the acute angle having, in certain cases, become too small and the right vertical straight line produced downwards, e.g. in *kamala* (L. 4), but in other cases, it retains the form of the Aphsaḍ inscription, e.g *valavī* (L. 6.),

(6) we find two forms of *śa* also.—(*a*) the earlier, with a curved, top as in *paramamāheśvara* (L. 3), and (*b*) the later form, which we find for the first time, and which resembles the 9th century form of the Dighwā-Dubhauh grant,[1]

(7) in *sa* the lower part of the left limb is cursive and projects beyond the vertical level of the left side of the letter,

(8) the third variety of the dental *sa* of the Aphsaḍ inscription is used in all cases.

The Bodh-Gayā and Khālimpur inscriptions of the 26th and 32nd year of the reign of Dharmapāla, most probably, were incised in the 9th and last decade of the 8th century A D.

In the Bodh-Gayā inscription of Dharmapāla we find :—

1 three forms of *śa* :

(*a*) the ancient form with the round top as in *Śilābhidaḥ* L. 1, *Keśava* L. 2 and *ṣaḍ-viṁśati* L. 7,

(*b*) the later form without the cross-bar as in *Mahadevaś-caturmukha and śreṣṭha* (L. 2),

(*c*) the transitional with the lingering cross-bar, as in *śreyase* (L. 4) ;

2 the cross-bar of the lingual *ṣa* going to intersect the acute angle at the bottom, instead of joining the right vertical line ;

[1] Buhler's Indian Palaeography, Eng Ed., pl. IV. XXI. 36.

3 in *ja* the upper horizontal bar disappearing entirely and being substituted by a wedge. The middle horizontal bar is a curve and longer in size in one case (*mahībhuji* L. 7) and shorter in another (*ujjvalasya* L. 1);

4 two forms of *na*.

(*a*) the older looped form occurring in all cases except two,

(*b*) the transitional form, between the Gupta shape and the Nāgarī or Bengali form, which we find in *ahani* (L. 9) and most probably also in *khānitā* (L. 6);

5 in *ṇa*, the base line almost disappearing in many cases, as in *puṣkarṇī* and *Viṣṇu* (L. 5) *dramma-ṇāṁ* and *sahasreṇa* (L. 6), the base line finally perceptible in *putreṇa* (L. 2);

6 in *ha*, the acute angle, at the lower extremity, more sharply defined. The characters of the Khālimpur grant of Dharmmapāla appear next, and in it we find some notable changes.

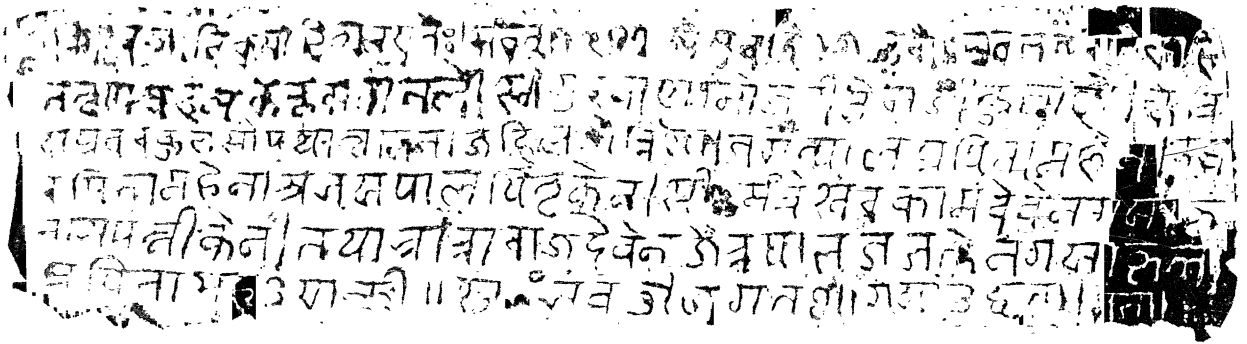
I. *Vowels.*

1. In *a*, we find a broad top-stroke, for the first time, which makes, the resemblance of the letter, to the initial Bengali *a* complete. Cf. *ajani* (L. 45).

2. In *ā*, we find, the length of the vowel is denoted, even in the case of the initial, by a full length vertical straight line, instead of a curve, attached to the lower extremity of the right limb In the case of the medial, this form is to be found, in all cases, in the Bodh-Gayā inscription also. For the initial form, cf. *asīd* in L. 5.

3. In the case of *i*, we see that the usual form is a wedge at the top with two circular dots below. Cf. the form in *iva* (L. 4) and *iti* (L. 7).

PLATE VII.



The Prapitamahesvara Temple Inscription-Gaya, V. S. 1299.